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TAGS: [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: FORMER ISTANBUL MAYOR GURTUNA PLANS TO RE-ENTER
POLITICAL LIFE

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer Sandra Oudkirk for Reasons 1.5
b and d

11. (SBU) Summary. On October 5, we met former Istanbul mayor Ali Mufit Gurtuna at his request to discuss his planned return to political life and founding of an as yet unnamed new political party. Gurtuna, a former member of AKP precursor parties Refah and Fazilet, claimed to know Prime Minister Erdogan's team well and expressed disappointment that the AKP government had "failed to at least accomplish the basics." He predicted that tension created by "government inaction" would increase in the economy, society, internal politics and foreign affairs. End Summary.

12. (C) In an October 5 meeting with us, former Istanbul mayor Ali Gurtuna voiced a litany of complaints against the ruling AK Party. On the economic side, Gurtuna accused the current government of lacking a serious approach to agriculture and animal husbandry, of failing to support the textile sector in its efforts to compete with China, and of ignoring unemployment. He also argued that the AKP has exacerbated a secular/religious divide and failed to "coordinate among government institutions." (Note: We took this comment as a criticism of relations between the Prime Ministry and the arch-secularist judiciary and military. End note.) In terms of foreign relations, Gurtuna criticized Erdogan's approach to both the EU and the United States. Gurtuna argued that the AKP came in to office espousing support for the drive for EU membership and then worked hard to begin the accession process. However, once the process began AKP leaders acted as if they were "no longer interested in the EU." This caused a credibility problem both domestically and with the EU. He argued that the approach to the relationship with the United States was plagued by similar problems, with the government sending both positive and negative signals.

13. (SBU) Gurtuna has a vision of Turkey as a "trustworthy, stable and credible country" involved in the world and capable of standing on its own vis-a-vis the international community. In an implicit criticism of AKP overtures to Middle Eastern countries, Gurtuna argued that Turkey's future is with the West and that Turkey should clearly demonstrate that it is a western country with close relations with the United States. Gurtuna's economic vision, although espousing support for increased efficiency including within the state-owned sector, harkens back to the non-market-based, statist strictures of the past. Gurtuna would like to see "support" for production, more attention paid to employment policies and a "plan" to sell what is produced.

14. (C) Gurtuna explained that he plans to announce a new party with a centrist orientation within the next month. The theme of this as yet unnamed party will be "peace and unity." He is working with teams throughout the country to prepare

the ground to launch his new party. He claims the new party, by being open members from both the center left and center right, will fill a void in Turkish politics. He declined to provide names of prospective members and supporters; however, dissatisfied with CHP leader Deniz Baykal, Sisli district mayor, Mustafa Sarigul (CHP), recently told us he might be interested in joining Gurtuna's new party.

¶5. (C) Comment: Gurtuna intends to travel to Washington in the near future (week of October 9) and is seeking appointments in Washington. We understand an associate of his is trying to set up meetings with officials at the Department and other Washington agencies. We recommend that time permitting EUR/SE agree to meet with Ali Gurtuna. End Comment.

¶6. (C) Bio notes: Gurtuna was born in 1952. He worked as a reported and attorney before entering politics. Gurtuna was elected to the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Assembly in 1984 and served as deputy chairman for five years. After several years in private life, he was again elected to the Istanbul Municipal Assembly in 1994 and became deputy chair. He was a Refah party member and Deputy Mayor when Mayor Erdogan resigned in 1998. He was selected to serve out Erdogan's term. He won his own 5-year term as mayor on April 18, 1999 as candidate for the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi). His relationship with Erdogan is reportedly rocky. Gurtuna reportedly cooperated with the public prosecutor investigating Erdogan on corruption charges instead of destroying records as directed by Erdogan according to press reports. The corruption investigation was dropped when Erdogan became Prime Minister.
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